

NEWS IN BRIEF

Monday 6th July 2009

Dates for your diary

Friday 10th July – end of term picnic

Summer holiday workdays

Thursday 23rd July (11am-3pm)

Friday 31st July (11am-3pm)

Saturday 8th August (11am-3pm)

Thursday 13th August (11am-3pm)

Saturday 22nd August (11am-3pm)

Wednesday 26th August (11am-3pm)

Saturday 29th August (11am-3pm)

Thursday 3rd September (11am-3pm)

Sunday 6th September (5-7pm)

The Festival of St. John – a celebration for the sun!

By Anna Letts

"I am the sun –

And I bear with my might

The earth by day, the earth by night.

I hold her fast, and my gifts I bestow

To everything on her, so that it may grow:

Man and stone, flower and bee

All receive their light from me.

Open thy heart, dear child, to me,

That we together one light may be"

Long hot days and light evenings, busy bees and sweet scented flowers together entice us into a dreamy, carefree haze. There is an urge to slow down and enjoy a cool drink or an ice lolly in the shade, and to let go of earthly worries.

This is precisely what we are called to do; the Midsummer sun shining brightly in the sky imbues all on earth with its life-giving forces, and reminds us that essentially we are all united. It is with this understanding at the core of our being that we are best prepared to refine our intentions as human beings and guide our self-development.

St. John's represents a major turning point in the year, for at this time the sun begins very slowly to leave us. Though it is a while off yet, we are set down on the inward turning path towards Christmas and midwinter. It is therefore a time for change and renewal, for shedding or 'burning up' dullness, unfruitfulness or destructive and angry forces, and making space for new ideas, new strengths and golden hearts. By lazing in the sunshine we can soak up its warmth and light, and store it within us as the days grow shorter.

Midsummer's Day is traditionally celebrated on the 24th June, a few days after the Solstice, as it is this day which is kept as the birthday of St. John the Baptist. His message to humanity is profoundly related to this time of year; he tells us 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord'(Luke 3) and 'He must increase, I must decrease' (John 3: 30). He speaks of Christ, of God and of the sun, and of the human need to make space on our 'inner path' to be guided by them.

Finally, life-giving unity and a chance for renewal are gifts to be celebrated. Dancing, singing, drums and flutes and a touch of wildness should not go amiss at St. Johns. Leaping through the flames of a St. John's bonfire is a tradition rooted in ancient times. Fire has a purifying and alchemical effect; it transforms substance and calls on our boldness of spirit.

We were blessed this year with a day of bright sunshine and a true Midsummer air. Thank you to everybody who attended our St. John's festival and made it so enjoyable.

What is a School Support Team.....what do they do?

By Jacqui Armour

With help from the Steiner-Waldorf Schools Fellowship Advisory Service, Norwich Steiner School is

working towards using a model of 'Associative Leadership' in how it governs and manages the organisation. As part of this process, the School Management Team will be writing a short series of articles for News in Brief, explaining some of the key concepts. We thought that we would start with one with which many of you are already familiar. You may already be a member of one of our School Support Teams, or be thinking about joining one.

A School Support Team is recruited to directly support the core task of the school. The core task of the school is teaching children. School Support Teams include the three teaching teams (Lower School, Kindergarten, Parent and Child) plus Afternoon Care, Administration, Personnel, Publicity, Events, Premises and Gardening.

School Support Teams have between three and five members, who are formally recruited. Teams can invite other people to help them with their work (without the need for formal recruitment). All School Support Teams are directly accountable to the School Management Team.

Each summer, the School Management Team asks every School Support Team to update its Team Plan (using a provided checklist), outlining their key areas of activity plus their 3-year development goals (based on the school's stated long term vision). This plan also includes how they will measure their effectiveness, and what policies and resources will be needed. Each of the Team Plans are then reviewed by the School Management Team and put together to make up the overall School Development Plan, which is then passed to the trustees (School Governance Team) for final approval.

Every School Support Team is offered training to help them learn how to use the Team Plan Checklist (provided by the Steiner-Waldorf Schools Fellowship). Teams are also offered training in designing and running effective meetings, a new approach to minute-taking, and decision-making within an associative leadership structure. The teams are then able to meet whenever they need to and produce agendas and minutes easily and quickly, to inform the School Management Team and others in the school community of their activities.

Groups have and may be formed within the school community that are not formally recognised as part of the school structure. These groups are therefore not formally recruited, nor are they accountable to the School Management Team. They may offer to help a School Support Team if they wish - for example, by working with a team to enhance an event that the team is responsible for.

If you have any questions about this article or any other aspect of how the school is managed and governed, please contact Jacqui Armour/Rachel Hales (School Management Team) and/or David Jones (School Governance Team).

If you have any questions about the Steiner-Waldorf Schools Fellowship Advisory Service (SWAS), please contact Kevin Avison (email: swas@steinerwaldorf.org).

If you have any questions about the Associative Leadership approach to running Steiner-Waldorf schools, please contact either Kevin Avison and/or Jonathan Wolf-Phillips (email: jonathan@new-leadership.com). Jonathan has been working with SWAS for some years now, helping them in one of their key tasks of providing direct support to schools.

Summer Holiday Workdays

By Sandie Tolhurst

It's actually hard to believe that this time a year ago, we had just been given the keys to what is now our school building and we were starting on the rather mammoth task of cleaning, repairing and redecorating the rooms and corridors. It was a difficult time because although we were 'in', there was no guarantee that we'd be allowed to stay. Following some local objection on the grounds of parking, congestion, road safety and competition, Norfolk County Council's committee were asked to make the final decision.

On 11th August the committee approved a sublease and the very next day Ofsted visited and gave us a stamp of approval, allowing us to open on 1st September. It was a summer when the children all had the chance to explore the building and we could all witness the slow transformation in each room as they were lovingly redecorated.

Through the year, we've managed to continue some of the redecorating; notably the new classroom and

the upstairs corridor. This summer we would like to be able to redecorate the gym hall, the stairways and the upstairs classroom which is currently used mainly for clay lessons; help is also wanted to complete the sandpit and fence in the vegetable garden. Please come and help this summer. There are plenty of opportunities and with a bit of luck the weather will be fine and our children can enjoy long days of playing together out in the fresh air.

On Sunday 6th September, we have agreed to lease the whole building and grounds to the launch of the Lakenham Guides Centenary celebration, and so we've arranged a cleaning session for the late afternoon evening on that day.

Human Givens

By Rachel Hales

When I was reading the articles that Noel wrote in the last edition of News in Brief I was reminded of my days of fund raising and a saying that I used when appealing for help.

We all have Three T's namely - our Time - our Treasure and - our Talent. They probably come in varying amounts for each of us but we do have them and they are ours to give.

These days Time might be seen as one of the most valuable. Many of us feel that we just don't have enough hours in the day, days in the week etc. Working longer hours, juggling jobs, families and even sometimes parents to look after can be all consuming. I think *time* is one of the most valuable givens we have. You just can't replace the *time* you give to someone or something. It is really giving of you. It provides physical energy, which is converted into supporting the school in a very essential form.

For some people Treasure is hard come by and there is not enough of it. Maybe one parent has not returned to work after having a family, they may choose to stay at home and parent their children. Others may be working full time and juggling busy schedules with a family, which can be hard on *time* but may create more *treasure*. *Treasure* is one of our riches – riches are valuable resources. The school needs resources in order to provide all the elements for the children to use and enjoy.

We may not know it but we all have Talent of some sort or another. It can take us the best part of a lifetime sometimes to find it – but its there waiting to be tapped into. Some *talents* are more obvious than

others. After school the other day my granddaughter came home and said that she had seen my friend Anne in the Kindergarten during the morning. When asked what Anne was doing there she said, "She had come in to practice washing up after the children had finished cooking". What a lovely way children see things. This lady was giving of her *time* and using one of her many *talents* to help the school. Whether your *talent* comes in the form of ability in a certain area or an expertise in a particular field I'm sure there will be a use for it in the school.

Since the inception of Norwich Steiner School many people have given generously of their Three T's which is much appreciated. Last September when the School moved premises more volunteers came forward which has resulted in the School growing beyond belief and it's a great credit to all who have been involved.

In order for the School to continue to thrive there are plenty of opportunities for others to get involved. We need you're energy, your resources and your ability or expertise. There are many ways you can offer your support be it your *time*, your *treasure* or your *talent*. Any of them will be most welcome.

Kutoa ni moyo usambe ni utajiri

(Giving is about heart not about wealth: Swahili proverb)

By Rob Grant

As we approached the limits of space at the previous site on Bowthorpe Road, it was sometimes hard to be optimistic about the prospects of finding a new home for our growing school. Later, amid the mess of tools and dust inside the battered shell of the Hospital Lane premises it often seemed impossible that all would be ready for the beginning of term. It is wonderful then, that in a short time we will complete the first year in our very beautiful new school. I am full of gratitude for the enormous amounts of work that have made this happen and for the opportunities that we and our children have been given.

Of course, many challenges remain. Not least there is the question of meeting rent payments and other financial needs, especially against a background of serious economic turmoil. One response is to try and supplement our income from fees with fundraising events and grant applications. Unfortunately, it seems to be the case that Steiner schools are not always the easiest causes for which to appeal for help either to the general public or to grant giving organizations. There can often appear to be a feeling that our

children are more privileged than average, rather than deserving of extra resources.

Despite this, thanks to the efforts of the people who have worked at fundraising for our school it has been successful and will undoubtedly continue to be important in future. My purpose in this article though is to suggest another type of fundraising that would allow us to express a sense of gratitude for where we are; that is, to raise funds for others who are in need of help.

The spring edition of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship newsletter led with an article on the Hekima Waldorf School in Tanzania. This surprised and delighted me in equal measure as I worked in the country before becoming a parent but had not imagined for a moment that there could be a Steiner school there. Although its economy has shown very encouraging growth in recent years, most Tanzanians remain desperately poor. Education is highly valued and teachers often show heroic commitment. However, resources are scarce. In addition, the country is burdened with the colonial legacy of a very rigid and formalised schooling system. Parental expectations are if anything more concentrated on academic results than in the UK, as a child's success in examinations represents possible escape from poverty for an entire family.

My suggestion then is simply that we consider a fundraising event of some kind in aid of the Hekima Steiner School. I do not have a specific activity in mind but it seems to me that it could be something public and visible, like selling raffle tickets at Greenstock for example, because the Tanzanian school is likely to have much wider appeal as a worthy cause than the Norwich Steiner School.

If anybody has any comments or ideas for suitable fundraising activities I'd be very grateful to receive them in person or at rob@rokaru.co.uk. In this article I have tried to express what has led me to think of our trying to help the Hekima school, rather than reproducing information about the school from the SWSF newsletter available at www.steinerwaldorf.org/newsletter_downloads.html. Readers are also encouraged to visit the Hekima school's own website, which includes many beautiful photographs, at www.waldorfeducationtrust.org (note: it is sometimes not accessible)

Class contacts and phone trees

By Noel Longhurst

Plans to introduce phone trees and class contacts in the autumn term were discussed again at the last Open Steering Group. It is expected that they would improve communication and provide support to the class teachers. Both class contacts and phone trees are normal practice within Steiner schools and, as our school grows, there is an increasing belief that they can play an important role here in Norwich.

Proposals for the exact roles and responsibilities of the class contacts are currently being drawn up based on examples from other schools and in consultation with the teachers. Similarly, proposals for how the phone trees will be used are also being developed. Further information will be circulated to parents in due course but if anyone wants further information at this point or wants to put themselves forward as a prospective class contact for the next academic year they can contact Noel Longhurst on 01508 55928

News from Chestnut.....

By Anna Letts

What a busy term it has been! With May Day, Whitsun and St. John's we've had a lot of celebrating to do. The children always rise to these special occasions and thrive in the atmosphere of joy and reverence. It is so lovely to see them arrive in the mornings with their fruit and flowers, and their eagerness to participate in the day's activities.

It has also been a pleasure to see our garden come to life this term. The beds are filled with delicious herbs, which we can smell as soon as we walk in the gate, and which we enjoyed on our pizza for St. John's day. Our first strawberries have just begun to appear, we have some ears of wheat for our bread next term, and the sunflowers (which children planted last term) are a thing of awe and beauty. There has been lots of weeding to do too, and the children have helped to pull them up and wheel them over to our compost heap.

Work and play with water outside has been helping us cool down. The plants have needed lots to drink, and there have been hot chocolate mud pies, little moats and streams, and lots of sheep's wool to wash and dry in the sun. This week we have been making bubble

wands with old coat hangers – it will be great fun blowing and chasing bubbles around the garden.

Inside the children have been particularly enjoying putting on puppet shows. We have seen some very elaborate scenes created and one story put on by the sun children which kept the whole kindergarten captivated for 40 minutes! They have also been constructing some great walkways and slides, and it has been very valuable for them to learn to make them safe with tied ropes and cushions.

I feel our sun children need a special mention; they have been so helpful this term, and have collectively shown a maturity and ability to manage themselves and others. They have also worked really hard on their projects – they have now all finished their weaving and made them into bags, which they proudly put on in the mornings when they arrive and often keep on throughout playtime! We will really miss them next term, but we look forward to hearing how they get on in the next stage of their journey.

It's hard to believe our first year in this beautiful setting has nearly passed. A great deal of work has been put in to keep things running smoothly and to help make it feel like 'home'. Our kindergarten certainly feels loved and lived in, and it will be a pleasure to return to after a well-deserved rest for the summer.

Publicity team

By Noel Longhurst

The newly separated publicity team has met twice and is developing a number of new (and old) ideas for raising the profile of the school as well as publicising its activities and events. We are currently a team of five, each with our own 'specialisms' and we would still welcome more help. You don't have to commit to regular meetings and could instead take on a specific role. If, like us, you believe that effective publicity is vital to the future success of the school, please contact us to discuss your own interests.

Thanks to all parents for their help with poster distribution, particularly those who cover regular areas. We are currently reviewing poster distribution to ensure that we are having the maximum possible impact. If you would be happy to distribute posters in your local area please speak to Trevor. Thanks also to those who have sponsored a Parish / local magazine

article. Please contact us if you would like to do this in your local area.

Finally, if anyone has any good contacts within the media or related fields that they think would be useful to the school please let us know.

publicity@norwichsteinerschool.co.uk

Suma Wholesale

By Brigid Hayman

I have an account with Suma which is a very ethical wholesale coop, you can buy in bulk and save money for school fees! If you are interested could you please email brigid@agcl.com from details.

News from Maple Kindergarten

By Sarah Higgins

As our first year draws to a close, the summer term has been full of joy for us all in Maple. It has been great for Margaret and I to see the Sun children full of their own initiative and motivation to finish their projects. This has allowed them a special time together, chatting as they work and the younger children from this have had more space and opportunity to play their own loudly imaginative games both indoors and out. We have all been enjoying some longer fairy tales at the end of the day, which brings the now very close group together after much jolly play outside.

We will all miss the sun children in Maple after they go up to Class One next year, but it is great to see them approaching that big step with reverence and anticipation.

Update on Class 1

By Jeremy Nowell

Class 1 has settled well since the separation from Classes 2 and 3 before half-term. The beautiful new classroom gave us all a fresh sense of identity and purpose. The shift from being the youngest group in a combined class to a growing awareness of their role as elder statesmen in September has produced a considerable shift in consciousness in the class. The children now look with some joy over their shoulders at the approaching Sun children. It is wonderful that they have been given this time to be a group on their own and to find their feet in their own classroom. It is

an exceptional group of children and I feel very blessed to be their teacher.

Since arriving in our new classroom we have balanced some hard work with some hard play. We started with a literacy block during which, for the first time, the children experienced writing with coloured pencils, rather than crayons. This was something of a revelation – I believe the children themselves were quite shocked at how good the results were! Whitsun came and went, with its sublimity, its doves, its candles and wishes. Our Thursday afternoon lesson became the focus for the class's sense of fun, creativity and mischief. Word games produced the unlikely 'Hoglesnoff', who lived in a dark cave in the ground... The children have been experimenting with creating stories collectively, often with hilarious results.

A maths block followed after half-term, and we walked number-runners in the gym and weaved seven-pointed stars from gardening twine. We placed conkers around circles and were amazed as all kinds of geometrical shapes began to appear. We revisited Roman numbers, broke a lot of sticks and revised the four processes.

The term is ending with what is called, in the jargon, a 'Home Environment' block, which I interpret as a literacy block with the emphasis on our gentle observation of the immediate natural environment. For those who feel ready, this block has provided the opportunity to begin to use their own words to express themselves. This is something we will be doing a lot more of next year. We have followed the adventures of the grumpy doc leaf and the surly stinging nettle, the unstoppable sunflower, the adventurous snail, the tentative bee, the angelic butterflies, the helpful cloud and the divine rose as they have unfolded on the blackboard and in our stories: all qualities which manifest themselves to a greater or lesser extent in our classroom from time to time!

Fundraising Charity Shop for the school

By Brigid Hayman

We have now been allocated a room to the right of the grey gate for a shop but it needs cleaning and

painting. Is anyone willing to help me with this? Please email brigid@agcl.com

New parent's handbooks

These are currently being revised and will be sent out to all families by mid-August.

Parent and Child Group news

By Helen Kibblewhite

Our Parent and Child Groups and playgroup have thrived this year, in the spacious and beautiful room we have in the school. The children and parents seem very much at home and it is wonderful to observe the unfolding development of the children during their critical first three years of life. These are the years when the young child learns to trust itself and the world, and to build crucial foundations for life – physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. It is inspiring to witness each child's unique development during this time, and see the beginnings of creative and sociable play.

Four people (staff and parents) attended the National Parent and child Group Leaders conference in June, at a country park near Cambridge, with the purpose of sharing knowledge about running outdoor parent and child groups and kindergartens. There is a countrywide interest in enabling children to return to the kind of play which used to happen, with no toys or equipment, but time and space to get absorbed in simply 'being'. It was wonderful to hear of the deep happiness and contentment of the children while they attended the few groups which have been set up.

Here in Norwich we are exploring possible venues, with the hope that we can begin an outdoor group in the future.

Best wishes for a summer with plenty of outdoor time from Helen, Sylvia and Tara

PS We need to replace some of our small baskets for toys and craft materials. Any that you could donate would be very gratefully received. Balls of wool (with at least some real wool content) are also needed.

Update from Class IV/V

By Michael Higgins

This term, class IV/V come to the end of their immersion in the world of Norse Mythology by the production and small performance of a play 'Baldur's Doom'. This story involves the death of Baldur, most beloved of the gods, by the scheming of the scandalous, shape shifting, and malevolent, though attractive trickster god: Loki.

This term has also seen the beginnings of an approach to science in the form of the study of the butterfly; a holistic study, from analytical drawing of the four life stages of the butterfly through a religion lesson exploring the existential paradox of the philosopher Chuang Tzu: "How do I know I am not a butterfly dreaming I am a man?" to the class observation of the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly over several weeks.

This work on transformation and shape shifting has been complemented in the drama and clay work lessons where the children have been modelling, acting and reciting Shakespeare's: "The seven ages of man".

The focus on the relationship between the human and the animal this year has involved working with a different poetic form relating to various animals. Here below is a kyrielle the children wrote as a group on the subject of the lion:

*"Protecting the pride from the threat of the wild
Playing with the cubs with manner so mild
The hunters are gone the wait is long
Crown and kingship are where you belong*

*Even the sun's resplendent flame
Is but a candle to your kingly mane
Your roar is a resounding gong
Crown and kingship are where you belong*

*But now down your cheek there runs a tear
The only wildlife are the humans so near
We wait to hear your mourning song
Crown and kingship are where you belong*

*The magnificent proud, now humbled lion
Should not be tame behind bars of iron
To keep you captive is surely wrong
Crown and kingship are where you belong".*

School & Kindergarten Cleaning

By Sandie Tolhurst

Thank you to everyone who has worked hard through the year to help keep this large building clean for all our children. We were determined if possible during this first year to keep costs down by trying to maintain good standards by volunteer effort only and throughout the year we have been evaluating how well this has worked.

All parents will be aware of the amount of work involved in the Friday afternoon cleaning, but only a few will be aware of what is going on behind the scenes on a daily basis. Both within the school day and at the end of each day – there are toilets to be kept clean, classrooms, corridors, stairways to be hoovered; rubbish and compost bins to be emptied; towels to be replaced and washed; windows and doors to secure (this alone takes about 30 minutes during these hot summer days) and washing up drinking cups ready for use the following day. It has been hard going to keep on top of these tasks.

From September it is also expected that the school and afternoon care will be operating on Friday afternoons, which means it will not be possible to run the cleaning rota with parents then, and we are reluctant to transfer the cleaning to a Saturday as this limits the potential to lease the building out to other users, as well as causing problems for Saturday events, such as open days.

Following due consideration of the situation, personnel team have recommended to the trustees that we employ a cleaner to do the basics of Monday-Friday cleaning during term time to do the basics of the cleaning. To help recover the cost of a cleaner, we are adding 30p/child/day to all fees and although there will still be the need for cleaning workdays during school holidays (e.g. to clean windows and surfaces, particularly after building/redecorating works), parents will no longer have to help with term-time cleaning as part of a rota; we know that some parents have really struggled with this, either because they have young children to care for or because they work on Friday afternoons.

See advert for cleaner in 'vacancies' below.

VACANCIES

Learning Support Assistant

A learning support assistant is required to provide individual classroom support to a child in class 1 from September. Hours of work will be 8.45am-1.15pm, Monday to Friday in term time. Pay will be £6.42 per hour including statutory holiday pay.

Ideally we would like applicants to at least have sat in on a Steiner class for a morning in order to experience this setting before applying for the job.

Closing date for applications is 24th July 2009.

Interviews 30th July.

Class teacher

A Class teacher required from September 2009 for a combined class 3/4 of around sixteen children aged 8-10 years of age. A positive attitude to the challenges that face a young Steiner School, a love of children and the ability to work harmoniously with parents and other colleagues is essential. A Steiner teaching qualification and experience are desirable, but we offer flexibility and a supportive environment, which could allow the right candidate to complete their Steiner teacher training whilst in post.

The starting pay for this post is negotiable, depending upon training and experience of the chosen candidate. The salary will fall in the range £17,000-£18,500 per annum (paid monthly in arrears), with a £500 annual increment each year, up to a current maximum of £20,000.

Closing date for applications is 24th July 2009.

Interviews 29th July.

Afternoon Care Assistant

Required to work alongside the afternoon care supervisor for four afternoons a week (Mondays-Thursdays during term time), between 1-4pm. Although their parents will generally have collected the children by 3.30pm, the afternoon care staff are expected to remain on the premises until 4pm or until there are no children left in their care and the premises are tidied and clean.

The pay for this post is £6.93 per hour, which includes 12.1% statutory holiday pay which is paid at the end of each term.

Closing date for applications is 24th July 2009.

Interview date to be posted on website shortly.

School Cleaner

A cleaner is required to work at the school on weekdays during term time, between 12.30-4.30pm. Work will be based on a schedule and includes cleaning toilets and washrooms, cleaning all kindergarten and school classrooms, corridors, and stairways. There may occasionally also be work outside, although most work will be within the building. This post would suit an energetic, self-motivated and reliable person with a positive approach to maintaining good standards of cleanliness in the school and who is flexible to responding to the daily needs.

Pay will be £6.42 per hour including statutory holiday pay, which is paid at the end of each term.

Closing date for applications is 24th July 2009.

Interview date to be posted on website shortly.

For further details of any of the above posts or an application form please call into the school office (until 10th July), telephone 01603 611175 (answerphone checked regularly through holiday period) or email info@norwichsteinerschool.co.uk